



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

White Mountain  
National Forest  
Androscoggin and  
Evans Notch  
Ranger Districts

300 Glen Road  
Gorham, NH 03581-1399  
Comm (603) 466-2856  
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File Code: 1950-1

Date: April 7, 2005

Dear Interested Citizen:

As Ranger of the Androscoggin District of the White Mountain National Forest, I am issuing a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and a Decision Notice on the Connor Brook Vegetation Management Project, located in the Town of Shelburne, Coos County, New Hampshire. I have decided to implement Alternative 2 (Modified Proposed Action) based on work done by resource specialists and comments provided by the public.

The project will harvest approximately 2.02 million board feet of timber utilizing both uneven-aged and even-aged management techniques on approximately 521 acres of National Forest land. It will also contribute toward achieving desired wildlife habitat conditions. Connected actions to the timber harvest include re-establishment of 4 log landings, restoration maintenance of approximately 2.1 miles of existing road, and prescribed burning on 29 acres to promote, enhance or maintain an existing oak community.

The Decision Notice/FONSI, which describes my reasons and conclusions for selecting Alternative 2 can be viewed on the National Forest web site at: [www.fs.fed.us/r9/white](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/white).

I would be glad to talk with you if you have any concerns or issues regarding my decision. You may phone me at 603-466-2713 ext. 210, or e-mail me at [kstuart@fs.fed.us](mailto:kstuart@fs.fed.us). If you have any other questions regarding this project, you may contact either Pat Nasta ([pnasta@fs.fed.us](mailto:pnasta@fs.fed.us)) at (603) 466-2713 ext. 222, or Stephen Bumps ([sbumps@fs.fed.us](mailto:sbumps@fs.fed.us)) at 603-466-2713 ext. 227.

Thank you for your participation in this project, and your interest in the White Mountain National Forest. Your comments contributed to my understanding of public issues and concerns regarding this project, and enabled me to make a more informed decision.

Sincerely,

/s/ Katherine W. Stuart  
District Ranger





United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

April 2005



# Connor Brook Vegetation Management Project

USDA Forest Service  
White Mountain National Forest  
Androscoggin Ranger District  
Coos County, New Hampshire

## Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact for the Environmental Assessment

### Appendix G – Forest Service Response to 30-Day Comments

Prepared by: Androscoggin Ranger District  
White Mountain National Forest

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**This document is available in large print.  
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**Connor Brook Vegetation Management Project  
Androscoggin Ranger District  
White Mountain National Forest**

**DECISION NOTICE and FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

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**Decision Notice and  
Finding of No Significant Impact  
Connor Brook Vegetation Management Project**

## **1.0 Background**

The Connor Brook Vegetation Management Analysis Area is located within the Town of Shelburne, Coos County, New Hampshire on the Androscoggin Ranger District of the White Mountain National Forest. The Analysis Area encompasses Habitat Management Unit (HMU) 215, an area of approximately 4,952 acres. All of the project activities are located in Management Area (MA) 3.1 lands within Compartments 43, 44 and 45.

## **2.0 Purpose and Need**

### **2.1 Purpose of the Action**

The Purpose of this project is to accomplish resource objectives to meet the overall management direction of the White Mountain National Forest, as established in the Forest Plan (USDA 1986a. Forest Plan, III 30-41). The Connor Brook Vegetation Management project addresses site-specific needs and opportunities to move the area from the existing condition (EC) toward the desired future condition (DFC).

The project also meets the goals of MA 3.1 to manage for a diversity of wildlife habitats for the full range of wildlife species and to provide a supply of high quality hardwood sawtimber and other timber products on a sustainable yield basis. Harvesting mature and overmature trees provides high quality sawtimber to area mills while at the same time, lower quality or damaged trees can be harvested to improve future stand quality and productivity.

### **2.2 Need for Change**

The Need for Change was determined by comparing Desired Future Conditions in the Forest Plan with the existing conditions in the Analysis Area. The Forest Plan provides desired conditions for even and uneven-aged management systems for MA 3.1 lands and HMUs.

**Table 1. Need For Change, by Acres of Community Type in MA 3.1 for HMU 215**

<b>Community Type</b>	<b>Existing</b>	<b>Desired Future Condition</b>	<b>Need</b>
<b>HMU 215</b>			
Hardwoods/mixedwoods (regeneration age)	0	111	111
Spruce/Fir/Hemlock	493	686	193
Paper Birch (regeneration age)	0	33	33
Oak/Pine	29	44	15

Table 1 shows that in order to meet the community type and age class objectives of the Forest Plan for HMU 215, there is a need to establish regenerating stands of paper birch and northern hardwoods; a need to release spruce, fir and hemlock from the understory of other stands; and a need to slightly increase or at least maintain the amount of Oak/Pine community. Commercial timber harvest can be used to achieve these objectives. Even-aged harvest methods can be used to convert mature and overmature northern hardwoods and paper birch stands to a younger, regenerating age class. Shelterwood harvest methods combined with prescribed burning can be utilized to improve conditions for oak regeneration. Uneven-aged harvest methods can be used to increase the spruce-fir component within mixedwood stands by removing the overstory trees, and improve stand conditions by removing damaged and poor quality trees in overstocked stands.

### **3.0 Decision to be Made**

#### **3.1 Decision Points**

The Decision Notice documents activities to be implemented to meet the project's Purpose and Need. The decision points considered in my selection of an alternative were:

1. Which of the alternatives would best move the Connor Brook Analysis Area toward the DFC outlined in the Forest Plan and best meet the Purpose and Need for action?
2. Which of the alternatives best addresses relevant issues raised by the public and the interdisciplinary team?
3. Would the proposed action and its alternatives pose any significant environmental impact to warrant the need for an environmental impact statement?
4. Do the mitigation measures for the proposed action and its alternatives meet the Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines?

#### **3.2 Decision**

I have decided to implement Alternative 2, the Modified Proposed Action (see map on page 13 and Table 2). I base my decision on the Environmental Assessment (EA), the direction provided by the Forest Plan (and the associated Final Environmental Impact Statement), the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), and on input provided through the Public Involvement process. I believe this alternative is responsive to the issues raised during the public scoping process, meets the Purpose and Need for Change with a balanced approach to resolving these issues, and accomplishes resource management objectives for HMU 215. I have read the comments submitted during the 30-day Comment Period, and I appreciate the quality of public input to this project. I considered this input carefully in making this decision. My rationale for selecting Alternative 2 is detailed in Sections 3.3 and 3.4 of this document.

Alternative 2 will best contribute toward achieving desired wildlife habitat conditions within Habitat Management Unit (HMU) 215, provide high quality hardwood sawtimber and other timber products on a sustained yield basis and establish 99 acres of early-successional habitat. Harvesting of approximately 2.02 million board feet of timber utilizing both uneven-aged and even-aged management techniques will occur on a total of approximately 521 acres of National Forest land. Connected actions to the timber harvest include re-establishment of four log

landings, restoration maintenance of approximately 2.1 miles of existing road, prescribed burning of 29 acres to promote, enhance or maintain an existing oak community, and widening of 1.8 miles of the Connor Brook Road to provide for winter dual use of snowmobiles and timber harvest vehicles. Road segments proposed for reclassification in the scoping process will be addressed at a later date.

**Table 2: Proposed Activities for Alternative 2**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Amount</b>
<b>Even-aged Management</b>	
• Regeneration Cut	56
• Seed Tree Cut	14
• Shelterwood Cut	29
<b>Uneven-aged Management</b>	
• Individual Tree and Group Selection (ITS&GS)	266
• Group Selection	156
<b>Transportation System (miles)</b>	
Miles of Road Restoration	2.1
Miles of Road Widening	1.8
<b>Prescribed Burning (acres)</b>	
Compartment 44, Stand 9	29

### 3.3 Reasons for Decision

I have selected Alternative 2 because it provides the most balanced approach to managing the resources available in HMU 215. Both of the Action Alternatives are viable, but I believe the opportunities to address the Purpose and Need for Change in HMU 215 outweigh the benefits of refraining from actively managing the vegetation and infrastructure on these lands. My reasons for selecting Alternative 2 are:

- Visual effects on the landscape would be minimized due to the size and location of proposed regeneration cuts and mitigation measures alongside roads, trails and brooks;
- It allows for future winter vegetation management projects in the area without foregoing recreational use of the snowmobile trail through the widening of FR 95/ Corridor 19;
- It aims to perpetuate one of the few existing oak communities in HMU 215 using a combination of prescribed fire and shelterwood prep cuts in stand 29;
- It partially addresses our shortage of early successional wildlife habitat as desired in the Forest Plan. It will move HMU 215 closer to its DFC by creating 56 acres of northern hardwood regeneration and 14 acres of paper birch regeneration;
- It follows Forest Plan direction for lands within Management Area 3.1 by providing timber products through intensive timber management practices and increases wildlife habitat diversity for the full range of wildlife species with emphasis on early-successional species and;



- It is consistent with the Forest Plan Amendment for Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species (April 2001), which is based on the terms and conditions contained within the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service Biological Opinion on the Effects of the Land and Resource Management Plan and other Activities on Threatened and Endangered Species in the White Mountain National Forest and Incidental Take Statement.

### **3.4 Other Alternatives Considered but not Selected**

In addition to the selected alternative, I considered two additional alternatives. For a detailed comparison of these alternatives see Comparison of Alternatives (Section 2.3) in the Environmental Assessment.

#### **Alternative 1: No Action**

Under the No Action alternative, current management plans would continue to guide management of the Analysis Area, and no timber harvest or connected actions would take place in the Project Area at this time.

I did not select this alternative because it does not meet the Purpose and Need for Change, nor does it achieve Forest Plan goals and objectives for MA 3.1 lands in HMU 215. Stand conditions would remain unchanged, except as determined by natural disturbance; and no new early-successional habitat would be generated through timber harvest. This Alternative would continue to fall short of meeting the need for maintaining diversity for the full range of wildlife species that inhabit the National Forest. No sawtimber or other timber products would be generated by timber harvest in the Project Area at this time.

#### **Alternative 3: Excluded Roadless Area Action**

Alternative 3 prescribes a reduced amount of acreage harvested as a result of a public comment. This alternative would establish 70 acres of early-successional habitat while harvesting approximately .935 million board feet of timber utilizing both uneven-aged and even-aged management techniques on approximately 296 acres. It would require restoration maintenance on 1.8 miles of existing roads, but dual-use widening would not occur.

I did not select this alternative because: (1) it is the least responsive of the Action Alternatives to the Purpose and Need for increasing wildlife habitat diversity, and regenerating northern hardwoods and paper birch in HMU 215 and (2) the harvesting proposed in Alternative 2 would not have an effect on the eligibility of the Forest Plan Revision Wild River Roadless Area as a Roadless Area, or result in an irreversible or irretrievable change in the condition of the land or its capability as potential Wilderness.

## **4.0 Public Involvement**

A scoping letter soliciting comments on the Connor Brook Vegetation Management proposal was sent to 250 interested people, adjacent property owners, local newspapers and various

agencies and organizations on June 23, 2004. The project was also listed in the Quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions for the White Mountain National Forest that is mailed to over 500 people interested in and/or affected by the White Mountain National Forest management. The scoping letter was also posted on the White Mountain National Forest web page ([www.fs.fed.us/r9/white](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/white)).

The 30-day Comment Period for the Connor Brook Environmental Assessment was initiated with a legal announcement in the Manchester Union Leader on January 27, 2005. The EA was mailed to 12 individuals who had requested it, and notice of the availability of the EA was sent to another 5 individuals who had requested it. In addition, the EA was posted on the White Mountain National Forest web page ([www.fs.fed.us/r9/white](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/white)). During this period, we received four responses. I have considered these comments in making my decision, and have included my response to all comments in Appendix G of this document.

#### **4.1 Issues Used to Formulate Alternatives**

The issues considered during the analysis were raised by the public, Forest Service employees, and the interdisciplinary (ID) team during the scoping process. The main issue of concern used to develop alternatives was:

##### **Issue 1: No Harvesting in roadless area until roadless rule has been settled or Forest Plan has been revised (Public):**

The Connor Brook project would not propose any road construction or timber harvesting within the Roadless Area covered by President Clinton's 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. The Roadless Area Conservation Rule would have applied to the 16 Roadless Areas inventoried in the 1986 Forest Plan, providing greater protection of these Roadless Areas than some of the Management Area prescriptions assigned by 1986 Forest Plan. To date, the Rule has not been formally implemented.

For the ongoing Forest Plan Revision, the White Mountain National Forest has completed a new Roadless Area Inventory. The new inventory expands the Wild River Roadless Area and a portion of the Connor Brook Project Area falls within its boundaries, including all stands to the west and south of the Corridor 19 snowmobile trail. Although the Forest Plan Revision will make a determination on future management of the Wild River Roadless Area, vegetation management is allowed within the proposed project area under all Alternatives of the revised plan.

#### **5.0 Finding of No Significant Impact**

After considering the environmental effects described in the EA, I have determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment considering the context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). Thus, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. I base my finding on the following:

##### **Both Beneficial and Adverse Impacts have been Considered**

Both beneficial and adverse impacts of implementing Alternative 2 have been considered in the EA (Chapter 3). My finding of no significant environmental effects is not biased by the beneficial effects of the action. Though the effects from Alternative 2 may be both beneficial and adverse to certain resources, the EA demonstrated that these effects are relatively minor and the impacts generated are not directly, indirectly or cumulatively significant.

### **Effects on Public Health and Safety**

There will be no significant effects to public health and safety because mitigation measures are in place to minimize conflicts between timber harvest activities and recreational users in the area. (EA, Appendix D, Recreation). Similar activities have been implemented in the past and the described mitigation measures have proven to be effective.

### **Unique Physical and Biological Characteristics**

There will be no significant effects to unique characteristics, such as prime farmland, within the project area since it has been forested for well over 100 years. There are no ecologically critical areas, such as wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, adjacent parklands, or Wilderness areas within the proposed project area. There are no significant effects to the Roadless or Wilderness character of the Wild River Roadless Area, nor will any of the proposed activities affect the availability of the Wild River Roadless Area for consideration as potential Wilderness in the Forest Plan Revision.

### **Controversy**

Consultation with natural resource organizations (New Hampshire Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, New Hampshire Natural Heritage Inventory and New Hampshire Historic Preservation Office) did not raise any highly controversial or uncommon concerns regarding the effects of the proposed action on the physical or biological environment. (see EA, Chapter 3). Nor did comments received from the public during the 30-day Comment Period refute the conclusions reached by the Forest Service. Based on the involvement of these organizations, the public and Forest Service resource specialists, the effects on the human environment from the proposed action are not highly controversial.

### **Highly Uncertain, Unique or Unknown Risks**

We have considerable experience with the types of activities to be implemented. The analysis shows the effects are not uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risk (Chapter 3 of the EA). The effects of the alternatives, as well as the range of site characteristics are similar to those types taken into consideration and disclosed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), Chapter IV. Past knowledge gained through records of timber sale inspections, stand examinations, monitoring and research have provided a basis for determining the effects likely to occur in response to the proposed action.

### **Precedent for Future Actions**

The action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects, since the timber harvest proposal is similar to many other harvests conducted on the White Mountain National Forest over many decades. The proposed action is consistent with the Forest Plan goals for Management Area 3.1.

### **Cumulative Impacts related to Other Actions**

The proposed action does not individually or cumulatively reach a level of significance. The Environmental Assessment (Chapter 3) describes the anticipated cumulative effects on vegetation, recreation, soils, water resources, air resources, fisheries, visuals, wildlife, threatened, endangered, and sensitive species, heritage resources, roadless areas and socio-economic. I am satisfied after review of the Environmental Assessment that none of the cumulative effects of the alternatives are significant. Where appropriate, mitigation measures are proposed to minimize any potential adverse effects.

### **Effects to Significant Scientific, Cultural or Historical Resources**

A cultural resource report (CRRR #04-2-5) was completed for the Project Area. Based on field surveys and a review of historic maps and literature there is no anticipated loss of significant historic or cultural resources. The New Hampshire State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred with the findings of our archeological survey and is in accordance with our proposed actions (August 2004). Mitigation measures (EA, Appendix D, Heritage Resources) will be employed to eliminate or lessen any impacts to undiscovered artifacts caused by timber harvesting and road restoration.

### **Threatened, Endangered Species and Their Habitats per the Endangered Species Act.**

The action will not adversely affect any threatened or endangered species or habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

The New Hampshire Natural Heritage Bureau (NHNHB) maintains inventories of critical habitats and rare species on National Forest lands. A landscape analysis and subsequent field reviews conducted by a private contractor in 2003 and 2004 found no records of listed plants in the Project Area.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with the determination that the proposed project will not have adverse effects to Indiana bats or Canada lynx. They also agreed that the proposed project will comply with measures and terms of the Incident Take Statement (Biological Opinion) for Indiana Bat and with conservation measures within the Canada lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy.

The design of Alternative 2 complies with the April 2001 Forest Plan Amendment for Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species.

## **The Threat or Violation of Federal, State or Local Laws or Regulations that Protect the Environment.**

The action will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment. Applicable laws were incorporated into the Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines (Forest Plan pages III-5-29, III-31-35, III-37-41), and the Proposed Action complies with the Forest Plan. In addition, some project mitigation measures have incorporated more recent “best management practices” utilized by state agencies.

## **6.0 Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations**

The decision to implement Alternative 2 is consistent with the intent of the Forest Plan's long term goals and objectives. The project was designed in conformance with Forest Plan Standards and incorporates appropriate Forest Plan Guidelines. Other applicable regulatory requirements and laws are listed below:

### **NFMA (National Forest Management Act)**

This project complies with guidelines that insure vegetation management provides a sustained yield of forest products, promotes diverse plant and animal communities, and occurs in suitable locations. The project area lies within Management Area 3.1 which is suitable for timber harvesting practices in accordance with the National Forest Management Act and its implementing regulations, 36 CFR 219.27(b)(1) and was confirmed by field examination.

The uneven-aged prescriptions proposed for stands 43/14a, 43/17b, 43/22a, 43/22c, 43/26a, 43/26d, 44/4, 44/6b, 44/6d, 44/7, 44/10a, 44/11, 44/12a, 44/17, 44/25, 44/26b, 45/4 and 45/9a are appropriate methods to accelerate regeneration growth in the understory (see Forest Plan, Appendix M).

The even-aged prescription (shelterwood preparatory cut) proposed for stand 44/9 is an appropriate method to improve chances for oak regeneration in the understory and future harvests (see Forest Plan, Appendix M).

The even-aged prescriptions proposed for stands 43/14b, 43/14c, 43/17a, 43/22b, 43/31, 44/6a, 44/6c, 44/13a, 44/26a and 45/9b are optimal methods to create early-successional wildlife habitat in the northern hardwood and paper birch community types (see Forest Plan, Appendix M).

In addition to the consistency findings pertaining to the White Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, as amended, this act establishes specific guidelines for prescriptions involving vegetative manipulation in National Forest Management (see Forest Plan, Appendix M, p.VII-M-9). My decision is consistent with the guidelines for management prescriptions that involve vegetative manipulation of tree cover [36 CFR 219.27(b)] as follows:

1. *The prescription should be best suited to the multiple-use goals established for the area with potential environmental, biological, cultural resource, aesthetic, engineering, and*

*economic impacts, as stated in the regional guides and Forest Plans [36 CFR 219.27(b)(1)].* The use of an even-aged management prescription is optimal because it regenerates stands that are mature, supplies wood products predicted in the Forest Plan (Forest Plan, Appendix M), and protects other resource values and mitigates effects as needed (Connor Brook EA: Section 3.2 - Vegetation; Appendix D – Mitigation Measures).

2. *The prescription should assure that lands can be adequately restocked except where permanent openings are created for wildlife habitat improvement, vistas, recreation uses and similar practices [36 CFR 219.27(b)(2)].* The practices prescribed for the Connor Brook Project are the same as those that have been successful in restocking WMNF MA 3.1 lands during past management entries (Project Record: Stocking surveys for Spruce Brook, Landing Camp, Camp 19, Pond Hill and Pond of Safety Timber Sales and Forest Monitoring Reports).
3. *The prescription should not be chosen primarily because it would give the greatest dollar return or the greatest output of timber, although these factors shall be considered [36 CFR 219.27(b)(3)].* Alternative 2 was chosen because it best meets the project Purpose and Need while responding to the issues and operating within the Forest Plan Standards & Guidelines (Connor Brook EA: Section 2.3 - Comparison of Alternatives; Section 3.13 Socio-Economics).
4. *The prescription should be chosen after considering potential effects on residual trees and adjacent stands [36 CFR 219.27(b)(4)].* No negative effects are anticipated to residual trees or adjacent stands (Connor Brook EA: Section 3.2 - Vegetation).
5. *The prescription should avoid permanent impairment of site productivity and ensure conservation of soil and water resources [36 CFR 219.27(b)(5)].* The prescriptions include Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines, Best Management Practices, and Mitigations Measures designed to prevent the permanent impairment of site productivity and conservation of water resources (Connor Brook EA: Section 3.2 – Vegetation, Section 3.6 – Soils; Section 3.7 – Water; Appendix D – Mitigation Measures).
6. *The prescription should provide the desired effects on water quantity and quality, wildlife and fish habitat, regeneration of desired tree species, forage production, recreation uses, aesthetic values, and other resource yields [36 CFR 219.27(b)(6)].* The prescriptions meet Forest Plan Standards & Guidelines, which describe the Desired Future Condition (Connor Brook EA: Chapter 3 – Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences; Appendix D – Mitigation Measures).
7. *The prescription should be practical in terms of transportation and harvesting requirements and total costs of preparation, logging, and administration [36 CFR 219.27(b)(7)].* Prescriptions use existing roads that need only restoration maintenance for use or temporary structures. Harvesting restrictions protect other resources. Costs of preparation, logging and administration are representative of average conditions in the area. (Connor Brook EA: Section 2.1 – Alternatives; Chapter 3 – Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences; Appendix D – Mitigation Measures).

### **NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act)**

This act requires public involvement and an interdisciplinary approach in consideration of potential environmental effects for proposed actions and alternatives. The Environmental Assessment is used to document compliance with this act.

### **National Historic Preservation Act**

The White Mountain National Forest consults with the New Hampshire State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) prior to reaching a decision on the project. We have received concurrence from SHPO on the cultural resource report and approval to implement the project with mitigations measures.

### **Endangered Species Act**

The White Mountain National Forest completed a site-specific Biological Evaluation (BE) of the potential effects to Threatened, Endangered, Proposed and Sensitive Species (TES). It was determined that there are not likely to be adverse effects to these species.

## **7.0 Implementation Date**

If no appeal is received, implementation of this decision may occur on, but not before, 5 business days from the close of the appeal filing period. If an appeal is received, implementation may not occur for 15 days following the date of appeal disposition.

## **8.0 Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities**

This decision is subject to appeal in accordance with 36 CFR 215.7. A person has standing to file an appeal only if they submitted substantive comments during the 30-day Comment Period. A Notice of Appeal must be in writing and clearly state that it is a Notice of Appeal being filed pursuant to 36 CFR 215.7. Appeals must be filed within 45 days of the date of legal notice of this decision in the Manchester Union Leader, Manchester, New Hampshire to:

USDA Forest Service, Eastern Region  
ATTN: Appeals Deciding Officer, Connor Brook Project  
626 East Wisconsin Avenue  
Milwaukee, WI 53202

The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered appeals are: 8am-4:30pm (Central Time), Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. The Notice of Appeal may also be faxed to 414-944-3963, Attn: Appeals Deciding Officer, USDA Forest Service, Eastern Regional Office; or it may be electronically mailed to [www.appeals-eastern-white-mountain@fs.fed.us](mailto:www.appeals-eastern-white-mountain@fs.fed.us).

Electronic appeals must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), Word (.doc), or any software supported by Microsoft applications.

It is the responsibility of appellants to ensure that their appeal is received in a timely manner. The 45-day time period is computed using calendar days, including Saturdays, Sundays, and Federal holidays. When the time period expires on a Saturday, Sunday, or Federal holiday, the time is extended to the end of the next Federal working day. The day after the publication of the legal notice of the decision in the Manchester Union Leader is the first day of the appeal-filing period. The publication date of the legal notice of the decision in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal. Appellants should not rely on dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. If you do not have access to the Union Leader, please call the Androscoggin Ranger Station at 603-466-2703, ext. 222 (TTY 603-466-2856) for the published date. There will be no time extensions for appeals.

When there is a question about timely filing of an appeal, timeliness shall be determined by:

1. The date of the postmark, e-mail, fax, or other means of filing (for example, express delivery service) an appeal and any attachment;
2. The time and date imprint at the correct Appeal Deciding Officer's office on a hand-delivered appeal and any attachments; or
3. When an appeal is electronically mailed, the appellant should normally receive an automated electronic acknowledgment from the agency as confirmation of receipt. If the appellant does not receive an automated acknowledgment of the receipt of the appeal, it is the appellant's responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means.

Appeals must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14. At a minimum, an appeal must include the following:

1. Appellant's name and address, with a telephone number, if available;
2. Signature or other verification of authorship upon request (a scanned signature for electronic mail may be filed with the appeal);
3. When multiple names are listed on an appeal, identification of the lead appellant (§215.2) and verification of the identity of the lead appellant upon request;
4. The name of the project or activity for which the decision was made, the name and title of the Responsible Official, and the date of the decision;
5. The regulation under which the appeal is being filed, when there is an option to appeal under either this part or part 251, subpart C (§215.11(d));
6. Any specific change(s) in the decision that the appellant seeks and rationale for those changes;
7. Any portion(s) of the decision with which the appellant disagrees, and explanation for the disagreement;
8. Why the appellant believes the Responsible Official's decision failed to consider the substantive comments; and
9. How the appellant believes the decision specifically violates law, regulation, or policy.

The Environmental Assessment for this project is available for public review at the Androscoggin Ranger District, 300 Glen Road, Gorham, NH 03581. In addition, the EA is posted on the White Mountain National Forest web page ([www.fs.fed.us/r9/white](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/white)). Questions



regarding the EA should be directed to Stephen Bumps, Forester, at 300 Glen Road, Gorham, NH 03581 (phone: 603-466-2713 ext. 227, FAX and TTY: 603-466-2856).

## **9.0 Responsible Official and Contacts**

The Responsible Official for the Connor Brook Vegetation Management Project is Katherine W. Stuart, District Ranger of the Androscoggin District of the White Mountain National Forest.

For additional information concerning this decision or the Forest Service appeal process, contact: Pat Nasta, NEPA Coordinator, at 300 Glen Road, Gorham, NH 03581, or by phone (603-466-2713 ext. 222), or by FAX and TTY (603-466-2856).

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/s/ Katherine W. Stuart  
District Ranger

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Date

Alternative 2  
Connor Brook Vegetation Analysis Area  
White Mountain National Forest  
Androscoggin Ranger District  
Town of Shelburne  
Coos County, New Hampshire

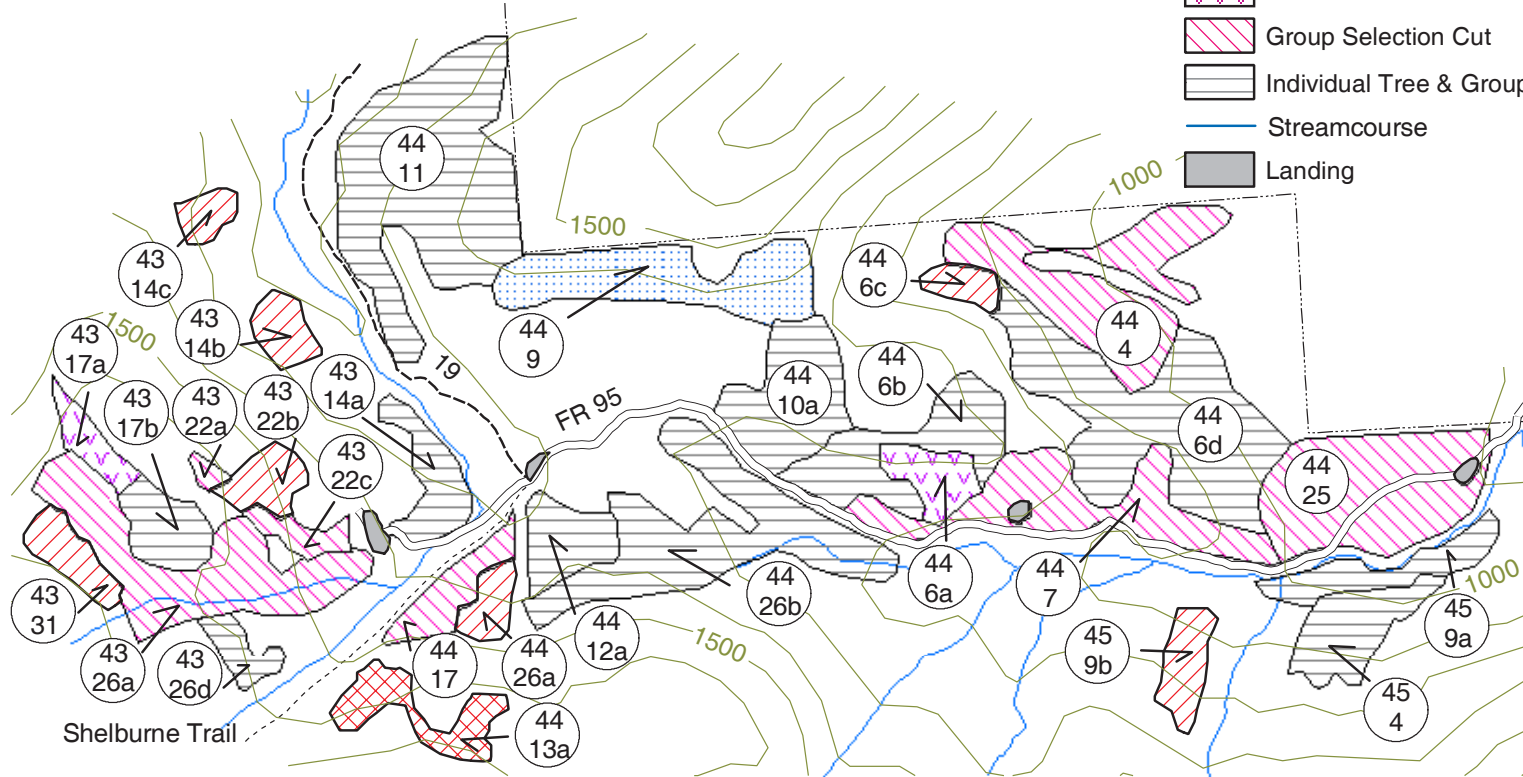


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**Legend**

- Ranger District Boundary
- Snowmobile Trail
- ==== Forest Road
- Forest Trail
- Contour Interval -100'
- Patch Clearcut
- Clearcut
- Shelterwood Cut
- Seed Tree Cut
- Group Selection Cut
- Individual Tree & Group Selection
- Streamcourse
- Landing



[http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/white/current\\_projects/connor\\_brook/map\\_2-alternative\\_2\\_2005\\_0404.doc](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/white/current_projects/connor_brook/map_2-alternative_2_2005_0404.doc) rjm

Connor Brook DN and FONSI

**APPENDIX G**  
**Responses to Public Comments on the**  
**Connor Brook Environmental Assessment**

The Connor Brook Environmental Assessment was offered for public review and comment for 30 days from January 27 through February 28, 2005. The invitation to comment was promoted through mailings, a Legal Ad in the Manchester Union Leader and posting the document on the White Mountain National Forest web site. Four responses were received via conventional mail.

We appreciate the time all respondents spent reviewing this Environmental Assessment (EA) and thank you for your thoughtful comments.

The comments are arranged by category and, wherever possible, the respondent is quoted directly and in the context of their full comments.

The categories are:

1. Support of proposed Connor Brook Vegetation Management Project
2. Recreation
3. Roadless/Wilderness
4. Wildlife
5. Socio-economics
6. Roads

**1.0 Support of the Proposed Action:**

**Comment 1.1:** *“I feel you should harvest at least the proposed 2.03 MMBF of timber as the harvesting is needed to keep the forest healthy and is very vital to the economy of this area. The restoring of 2.1 miles of existing forest road would be a good safety measure so men & equipment could get into this area faster if there should be a forest fire or other emergency.”*

**Comment 1.2:** *“I believe that alt II is the best alt. I think the burn to promote oak growth and other new growth is important in limited areas. Even though clear cut has its place, I believe more in the Group selection and individual tree cuts.”*

**Comment 1.3:** *“... would like to restate its support for the project.”*

**Response:** Comments noted and appreciated.

**2.0 Recreation:**

**Comment 2.1:** *“The Connor Brook Road should be widened for long term winter dual use of snowmobiles and summer use of ATV’s. Both of these uses could help the local economy by bringing more people to the area for such sports.”*

**Response:** On the White Mountain National Forest, there are no designated summer ATV trails. During the winter, ATV and snowmobile use is permitted on designated trails when adequate snow levels and conditions warrant. All other uses are not permitted.

### **3.0 Roadless/Wilderness:**

**Comment 3.1:** *“The Connor Brook Vegetation Management Project Environmental Assessment (p40, 41) lists four “roadless characteristics”. 1) FSH1909.12, 7-11b-Criteria for Roadless Areas in the East lists eight criteria (if my copy is correct). 2) FSH uses the word “criteria” rather than “characteristics”. 3) Your first three “characteristics” are in the FSH eight criteria but are not stated exactly as in FSH. 4) Your fourth “characteristic” does not appear in FSH. What is the authority for this criteria”?*

**Response:** The concerns listed were addressed in a letter to the commenter which discussed the selection of Alternative Two as having “...no effect on the eligibility of the Inventoried Wild River Roadless Area to remain a Roadless Area” and does not “... result in irreversible or irretrievable changes in the condition of the land or its capability as potential Wilderness.” (Connor Brook Environmental Analysis, page 42).

The use of the term “characteristic” as opposed to “criteria” in the Affected Environment analysis is primarily a matter of semantics. Forest Service Handbook 1909, 7.11b lists eight criteria used to determine if Roadless Areas in the east qualify as potential Wilderness. The Connor Brook EA does not address whether or not the Wild River Roadless Area meets the roadless “criteria”; rather it analyzes the effects of the alternatives on those “characteristics” that meet the criteria and establish Wild River as a roadless area.

Only those characteristics affected by the proposed Connor Brook Project were considered necessary to be evaluated. The last characteristic (page 41) is associated with the 4th criteria listed in FSH1909, 7.11b. This criterion relates to Section 2 (C)(2) of the Wilderness Act, which states that wilderness “...has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.” Direction on a method to identify areas capable of providing solitude was issued by our Regional Forester in a 1997 letter. It focuses on what we call Recreational Opportunity Spectrum. It allows us to map areas that are more than a half mile from sources of motorized uses. We call these primitive and semi-primitive non-motorized recreation areas. To qualify for these spectrums, mapped areas must be at least 2500 acres in size—or what we call a “core area of solitude”. The exception to the 2500 acre size is areas adjacent to existing Wilderness.

**Comment 3.2:** *“... has generally supported the North Country Council in its efforts to address regional concerns in the revised forest plan but has specifically objected to the inclusion of the so called “Wild River Wilderness Area” believing that leaving the land in its current status best protects it and meets the needs of the communities effected.”*

**Response:** This is a Forest Plan revision issue, and is outside the scope of this project environmental analysis.

### **4.0 Wildlife:**

**Comment 4.1:** *“There was mention of leaving the tree tops and dragging some back from the yards. I believe some should be pushed into piles for rabbits. I know they like brushy areas but so do foxes and coyotes. Brush piles are a haven for them.”*

*I'm old enough to remember being brought up in northern VT & NH when everything was done by hand & with horses. Every brush pile had a rabbit. When modern logging came along the rabbits started to disappear. I believe that is one of the reasons. I do have a few people who agree with me."*

**Response:** The key habitat component that snowshoe hare need for cover is a dense understory (Hodges 2001), which can include forested stands with shrubs, densely stocked stands, swamps, bogs, or alder fens and may be shared by predators such as coyotes and/or foxes. During active harvest operations, all slash that is created from delimbing trees in log landings will be hauled back into the forest. This may provide some limited cover for wildlife in the short term. However, the best cover habitat that may be created as a result of this timber sale would be from growth of the understory and eventually young saplings in clearcut, patchcut, seed tree cut, and small groups in softwood stands.

Hodges, K. E. 1999. Ecology of snowshoe hares in southern boreal and montane forests. Chapter 7 in: Ruggerio, L. F., K. B. Aubry, S. W. Buskir, G. M. Koehler, C. J. Krebs, K. S. McKelvey, and J. R. Squires. Ecology and conservation of lynx in the United States. USDA Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station General Technical Report RMRS-GTR-30WWW. 480pp.

## **5.0 Socio-economics:**

**Comment 5.1:** *"As the National Forest is the largest landowner in Shelburne the yield taxes generated from "Vegetative Management Projects" are an important offset to the community for the loss of property taxes from the land."*

**Response:** Comment noted and appreciated.

## **6.0 Roads:**

**Comment 6.1:** *"...the only concern of the Town would be to restrict the access on the expanded woods road to its current level e.g. keep the gate."*

**Response:** Comment noted and appreciated.